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DRAFT CABLE

1. The tempo of drawdown of U.S. forces has added note of immediacy to questions regarding the Phung Hoang Program. These questions themselves are aligned into three basic categories:

(1) Is there requirement for continuation of U.S. advisors [specifically identified for support to GVN Phung Hoang program?] to the GVN's counter-subversion effort, whether or not the term "Phung Hoang" and its associated committee structure is dropped?

(2) Will USG capabilities to provide such advisory assistance to the GVN's counter-subversive effort [Phung Hoang Program] be impaired by reduction of U.S. military personnel ceiling?

(3) What type of organization on U.S. side will be required for follow up effort in post withdrawal period?

2. With regard to first issue, it is understood that meeting was held with Prime Minister attended by all concerned U.S. agencies in Vietnam where decision was reached that National Police Operations Centers would be responsible for all anti-criminal and anti-VC activities.

This would eliminate requirement for duplication of facilities and personnel for separate police operations centers, DIOCC's, and PIOCC's.

At this meeting we understand U.S. and GVN agreed that CORDS/PSD would be responsible for strengthening of National Police institutions

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and advising elements of National Police, except Special Branch, which may be involved with apprehending VCI. Concurrently, it was agreed that OSA would maintain responsibility for advising Special Branch activities concerned with police operations centers. It was agreed that these advisory programs would effectively fulfill U.S. requirements for advising anti-VC activities. Any advice, if required, to Chairmen of the Phung Hoang Committees (GVN District and Province Chiefs) to be provided by senior U.S. District and Province Advisors. It now appears that question as to which U.S. agency should bear advisory responsibility to Phung Hoang has been overtaken by U.S. and GVN agreement that anti-VC activities will be assumed by National Police operations centers and not by residual Phung Hoang Committees. This approach would appear eliminate requirement for specific advisors for Phung Hoang activities.

3. With regard to second issue, if it becomes apparent that continuation of specific Phung Hoang advisory assistance is required, then a course of action must be developed to continue availability of U.S. military personnel. It has been recommended by [personnel feeling] persons who believe a continuation of specific advisory services is required that Phung Hoang advisory program be exempt from drawdown of U.S. military forces in Vietnam. If this is the case, a reasonably accurate estimate of number of advisors planned for November 1 is required as soon as it can be calculated.

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4. With regard to third issue, it is important not to get hung up on the term Phung Hoang. That term may disappear, along with the present structure of Phung Hoang committees. If it does, however, the problem the Phung Hoang structure was erected to address will still remain: namely, the institutionalized existence of a Communist subversive apparatus determined to overthrow the GVN by any and all means necessary, including armed force -- i. e., the VCI. Thus, with or without the term "Phung Hoang," there are several questions that must be answered in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the GVN counter-subversive program and the continuing U.S. advisory input necessary to support it. [that will ultimately replace the U.S. military advisory effort with Phung Hoang if such advisory effort is determined to be necessary.] The questions as we see them are as follows:

(a) Who would advise various elements of the police on their counter-subversive responsibilities?

(b) Who would advise various other elements of GVN which have an anti-VCI responsibility, i. e., MSS, Province Chiefs, District Chiefs?

(c) What would become of PRU? If it continues to exist, who, if anyone, will advise it?

(d) What would be relationship between all counter-subversion advisors, especially between USAID/CORDS police advisors and [U.S.] OSA special police advisors?

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(e) Who would take responsibility for training facilities currently used to support anti-VCI program?

(f) Who would take responsibility for making intelligence estimates of VCI strength and capabilities?

5. It appears at this end, based on opinions of those who have had some contact with the existing Phung Hoang Program, that answers to the above questions not only require plan for a follow-on program to aid the GVN in its anti-subversive activities but also must deal head-on with constraints that have been placed on USAID operations. While in past U.S. military advisory effort provided buffer between USAID and counter-subversive activities of National Police, removal of that buffer requires that we face problem of counter-subversive advisory roles rather more squarely. If it is believed in field that operational and numerical strength constraints placed on USAID and [CIA] OSA are such that a cohesive advisory effort is jeopardized, then issue must be taken up by NSC so that it can be resolved as soon as possible. With regard to particular issue of organization on U.S. side, it has been suggested that over-all responsibility for advisory effort should perhaps reside in senior official of Mission, where coordination of various U.S. elements could take place most expeditiously. The Deputy Ambassador's office would look to us like logical place, particularly in view of Mr. Whitehouse's background and expertise.

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6. Because of clearly urgent need to make necessary decisions on how U.S. will structure its future advisory support to the GVN's obviously essential task of combatting organized internal subversion, we need your response to this cable and the questions it raises as expeditiously as possible, but not later than [17] 24 March.

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